

What is claimed is:

1. An e-mail server device which manages user information including at least one user, and delivers an e-mail to the at least one user specified in the user information, said device comprising:
 - 5 a receiver which receives e-mails;
 - a transfer unit which transfers, in a case where an address of the received e-mail is an e-mail address of a user specified in user information managed by another e-mail server device, the received e-mail to the another e-mail server device;
 - an inquiry unit which inquires of the at least one user, in a case where the address of 10 the received e-mail is a public e-mail address of the user specified in the user information managed by the e-mail server device, whether to accept the received e-mail to be delivered from its addresser;
 - a notification unit which notifies the addresser that there is no user having the public e-mail address, in a case where the at least one user does not accept the received e-mail to 15 be delivered from the addresser as a result of the inquiry; and
 - a delivery unit which delivers the received e-mail to the user having the public e-mail address, in a case where a delivery condition for delivering the e-mail is satisfied.
2. The e-mail server device according to claim 1, further comprising an allowed-addresser recorder which records information representing the addresser 20 of the received e-mail as an allowed addresser in association with the public e-mail address, in a case where the at least one user accepts the received e-mail to be delivered from the addresser as a result of the inquiry, and
wherein the delivery condition is satisfied, in a case where the information representing the addresser of the received e-mail is recorded as the allowed addresser on 25 said allowed-addresser recorder in association with a public e-mail address of the address of the e-mail.
3. The e-mail server device according to claim 1, further comprising:

an individual-address selector which selects an individual e-mail address managed by said e-mail address server, in association with the addresser of the e-mail and the user having the public e-mail address corresponding to the addressee of the received e-mail, in a case where the received e-mail is accepted to be delivered from the addresser as a result

5 of the inquiry;

an individual address informer which informs the addresser of the e-mail about the selected individual e-mail address; and

an individual address recorder which records information representing the user as a target user having the public e-mail address of the received e-mail and information

10 representing the addresser as an informed-addresser, in association with the selected-individual e-mail address, and

wherein the delivery condition is satisfied, in a case where the address of the received e-mail is the individual e-mail address recorded on said individual address recorder and information representing the addresser of the e-mail is recorded as an informed addresser, thereby the delivery unit delivers the e-mail to the user as the target

4. The e-mail server device according to claim 3, wherein:
said individual address selector selects, as an individual e-mail address, an e-mail
address generated by converting characters of the public e-mail address of the received e-
mail; and

the original public e-mail address is generated from the individual e-mail address as a resultant address of the character conversion, thereby achieving character reverse conversion of the individual e-mail address.

5. The e-mail server device according to claim 4, wherein a predetermined
25 character string is added in a user name of the public e-mail address, thereby achieving
the character conversion of the public e-mail address.

6. The e-mail server device according to claim 3, further comprising

a rewriting unit which rewrites the public e-mail address of the addresser specified in the e-mail into the individual e-mail address of the addresser recorded in association with the addresser and the addressee, in a case where rewriting conditions that

(i) a public e-mail address of the user specified in the user information

5 managed by said e-mail server device is specified as the addresser of the received e-mail,
and that

(ii) the individual address recorder records information representing the

addressee of the received e-mail as an informed addresser and information representing the user having the public e-mail address as a target user, in association with a

10 corresponding individual e-mail address,

are satisfied, and

wherein said transfer unit transfers an e-mail having the address rewritten by the rewriter instead of the received e-mail, in a case where the above rewriting conditions are satisfied.

15 7. A method for providing an e-mail service for managing information regarding
at least one user and his/her e-mail address and for sending e-mails to the at least one user,
said method comprising the steps of:

receiving an e-mail;

transferring the received e-mail to another e-mail server device, in a case where an

20 address of the received e-mail is not managed by said method for managing the e-mail service;

inquiring of the at least one user whether to accept the received e-mail to be delivered, in a case where the address of the received e-mail is a public e-mail address of the at least one user which is managed by said method for providing e-mail service;

25 informing, in a case where the received e-mail is not accepted to be delivered from
an addresser of the e-mail as a result of inquiring of the user, the user that there is no user
having the public e-mail address; and

delivering the received e-mail to a user having the public e-mail address, in a case where a delivery condition for delivering the received e-mail is satisfied.

8. The method according to claim 7, further comprising the step of recording information representing the addresser of the received e-mail as an 5 allowed addresser, in association with the public e-mail address, in a case where e-mails are accepted to be delivered from the addresser of the received e-mail as a result of the inquiry, and

wherein the delivery condition is satisfied, in a case where information specifying the addresser of the received e-mail is recorded as an allowed addresser in association 10 with the public e-mail address corresponding to the addressee of the received e-mail at said the information recording step.

9. The method according to claim 7, further comprising the steps of: selecting the individual e-mail address managed by said method for providing an e-mail service, in association with the user having the public e-mail address corresponding 15 to the addressee of the received e-mail and with the addresser of the received e-mail, in a case where the received e-mail is accepted to be delivered from the addresser as a result of the inquiring;

informing the addresser of the received e-mail about the selected individual e-mail address; and
20 recording information representing the user as a target user having the public e-mail address corresponding to the addressee of the received e-mail and information representing the addresser as an informed-addresser which is informed about the individual e-mail address, and

wherein the delivery condition is satisfied, in a case where the addressee of the 25 received e-mail is the individual e-mail address recorded at said individual address recording step and where information representing the addresser of the received e-mail is recorded as an informed-addresser, thereby the e-mail is delivered to the user specified as

the target user in the recorded information at said delivering step.

10. The method according to claim 9, wherein:

a resultant address created by converting a character code of the public e-mail address corresponding to the addressee of the received e-mail is selected as an individual 5 e-mail address at said individual-address selecting step; and
the original public e-mail address is generated from the individual e-mail address as a resultant address of the character conversion, thereby achieving character reverse conversion of the individual e-mail address.

11. The method according to claim 10, wherein the character conversion is so 10 performed that a resultant address including a predetermined character string in a user name of the public e-mail address is obtained.

12. The method according to claim 9, further comprising the step of rewriting the public e-mail address of the addresser specified in the e-mail into the individual e-mail address of the addresser recorded in association with the addresser and 15 the addressee, in a case where rewriting conditions that

(i) a public e-mail address of the user specified in the user information managed by said method is specified as the addresser of the received e-mail, and that

(ii) information representing the addressee of the received e-mail as an informed addresser and information representing the user having the public e-mail

20 address as a target user are recorded at said individual-address recording step, in association with a corresponding individual e-mail address,

are satisfied, and

wherein an e-mail having the address rewritten by the rewriter instead of the received e-mail is transferred at said transferring step, in a case where the above rewriting 25 conditions are satisfied.

13. A computer readable information recording medium which records a program for controlling a computer to function as said e-mail server device according to claim 1.

14. A computer readable information recording medium which records a program for controlling a computer to execute the method for providing an e-mail service, according to claim 7.

15. The computer readable information recording medium according to claim 13, 5 wherein said information recording medium is a computer disk, a floppy disk, a hard disk, a magneto-optical disk, a digital video disk, a magnetic tape, or a semiconductor memory.